

“Everywhere there are distilled spirits”: Alcohol Consumption and Alcoholism on the Chilean Frontier at the Turn of the Twentieth Century[✉]

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Abstract. Objective/Context: The incorporation of the Araucania region into Chilean territory, after the end of the military occupation in 1883, led to an increased process of colonization, exploration by traveling scientists, and the settlement of missionaries in the area. In addition, mestizo rural laborers (*rotos*) and European colonists joined the *fronterizos*, settlers who were already living on the frontier before the occupation. This article analyses the dynamics and effects of alcohol consumption and alcoholism regarding the perception of mestizo settlers and the indigenous population on the Chilean frontier at the turn of the twentieth century. **Methodology:** The analysis relies on primary sources, consisting mainly of travel books, reports, and scientific publications written by Chilean and European scientists, politicians, and missionaries, that have not yet been sufficiently studied. **Originality:** Using the less studied example of alcohol consumption on the Chilean frontier, this work’s contribution consists of demonstrating how the intense processes of occupation and colonization—and, in particular, the perceptions of different actors about indigenous and mestizo settlers—resulted in new forms of stigmatizing the settlers called *rotos* and the indigenous population, and, consequently, in the consolidation of social hierarchies. **Conclusions:** While alcohol consumption was acceptable for certain populations, as evidenced by the wine industry’s simultaneous prosperity, it was reprehensible for indigenous people and mestizo settlers. Because of the stigmatized perception of these social groups as drunk, lazy, and poor, especially in the context of intensive colonization that provoked increasing interest in lands occupied mainly by indigenous people and *fronterizos*, alcoholism can be interpreted as a vehicle for specific dynamics of exclusion. Ancient conceptions of a heroic indigenous culture, in the long run, led missionaries to strive to “protect” these groups from alcoholism, while traders used the images of heroic *araucanos* to establish extractive economies for national and foreign markets. The analyzed documents reveal that the indigenous population, as well as the *rotos*, became portrayed as helpless victims in need of moral education by intellectuals and missionaries, which sought to legitimize missionary work. In this sense, perceptions, social practices, and the mobility of knowledge on alcohol consumption proved to be a highly disputed field in the context of colonization and the incorporation of Araucania into the Chilean state.

Keywords: alcohol consumption, alcoholism in science, Chilean frontier, colonization, indigenous culture, missionary work, public health.

✉ The idea of investigating this topic originated during the development of my doctoral thesis, still in the course of the writing process. Although the thesis entitled “Frontier Medicine: Practices, Knowledge and Science in Southern Chile” at the Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (Germany) does not address this topic, this research project builds the basis for many of the questions and methods used to research knowledge practices and the dynamics of knowledge in the field of healing and medicine in southern Chile. Research toward this article was supported in part by a DAAD Fellowship in Chile (2018-2019). I thank the editors, as well as the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful feedback.

“Hay bebidas espirituosas destiladas en todas partes”: consumo de alcohol y alcoholismo en la frontera chilena a comienzos del siglo XX

Resumen. Objetivo/Contexto: la incorporación de la región de la Araucanía al territorio chileno, después de terminar la ocupación militar en 1883, resultó en un intenso proceso de colonización, exploración por científicos viajeros y establecimiento de misioneros en la zona. Además, trabajadores rurales mestizos (‘rotos’) y colonos europeos se unieron a los fronterizos, colonos que ya estaban viviendo en la frontera antes de la ocupación. Este artículo analiza la dinámica y los efectos del consumo de alcohol y el alcoholismo en la percepción de los pobladores mestizos y la población indígena en la frontera chilena a principios del siglo XX. **Metodología:** el análisis se basa en fuentes primarias, que consisten principalmente en libros de viajes, informes y publicaciones científicas escritos por científicos, políticos y misioneros chilenos y europeos, que aún no han sido suficientemente estudiados. **Originalidad:** utilizando el ejemplo poco estudiado del consumo de alcohol en la frontera chilena, el aporte de este trabajo consiste en demostrar cómo los intensos procesos de ocupación y colonización —y, en particular, las percepciones de diferentes actores sobre los pobladores indígenas y mestizos— dieron como resultado nuevas formas de estigmatizar los pobladores denominados ‘rotos’ y la población indígena, y, en consecuencia, la consolidación de jerarquías sociales. **Conclusiones:** si bien el consumo de alcohol era aceptable para ciertas poblaciones, como lo demuestra la simultánea prosperidad de la industria del vino, era reprobable para los indígenas y los colonos mestizos. Debido a la percepción estigmatizada de estos grupos sociales como borrachos, holgazanes y pobres, especialmente en el contexto de la intensa colonización que provocó un creciente interés en tierras ocupadas principalmente por indígenas y fronterizos, el alcoholismo puede interpretarse como un vehículo para dinámicas específicas de exclusión. Las antiguas concepciones de una cultura indígena heroica, a la larga, llevaron a los misioneros a esforzarse por ‘proteger’ estos grupos del alcoholismo, mientras que los comerciantes usaban las imágenes de araucanos heroicos para establecer economías extractivas para los mercados nacionales y extranjeros. Los documentos analizados revelan que tanto la población indígena como los ‘rotos’ fueron retratados por intelectuales y misioneros como víctimas indefensas y necesitadas de educación moral, lo cual buscaba legitimar la labor misionera. En este sentido, las percepciones, las prácticas sociales y la movilidad del conocimiento sobre el consumo de alcohol resultaron ser un campo muy controvertido en el contexto de la colonización y la incorporación de la Araucanía al Estado chileno.

Palabras clave: alcoholismo en la ciencia, colonización, consumo de alcohol, cultura indígena, frontera chilena, labor misionera, salud pública.

“Há bebidas espirituais destiladas em todos os lugares”: consumo de álcool e alcoolismo na fronteira chilena no início do século XX

Resumo. Objetivo/Contexto: a incorporação da região da Araucanía ao território chileno após terminar a ocupação militar em 1883 resultou num intenso processo de colonização, exploração por cientistas viajantes e estabelecimento de missionários na região. Além disso, trabalhadores rurais mestiços (‘rotos’) e colonos europeus se uniram aos fronteiriços, colonos que já estavam vivendo na fronteira antes da ocupação. Neste artigo, são analisados a dinâmica e os efeitos do consumo de álcool e do alcoolismo na percepção da população mestiça e da indígena na fronteira chilena no início do século XX. **Metodologia:** a análise está baseada em fontes primárias que ainda não foram suficientemente estudadas e que consistem principalmente em diários de viagens, relatórios e publicações científicas escritos por cientistas, políticos e missionários chilenos e europeus. **Originalidade:** utilizando o exemplo pouco estudado do consumo de álcool na fronteira chilena, a contribuição deste trabalho consiste em demonstrar como os intensos processos de ocupação e colonização —e, em particular, as percepções de diferentes atores sobre as populações indígenas e mestiças— deram como resultado novas formas de estigmatizar as populações denominadas ‘rotos’ e a população indígena, e, em consequência, a consolidação de hierarquias sociais. **Conclusões:** embora o consumo de álcool fosse aceitável para certos povos, como é demonstrado pela simultânea prosperidade da indústria do vinho, era reprovável para os indígenas e para os colonos mestiços. Devido à percepção estigmatizada desses grupos

sociais como bêbados, vagabundos e pobres, especialmente no contexto da intensa colonização que provocou um crescimento interesse em terras ocupadas principalmente por indígenas e fronteiriços, o alcoolismo pode ser interpretado como um veículo para dinâmicas específicas de exclusão. As antigas concepções de uma cultura indígena heroica, em longo prazo, levaram os missionários a se esforçar para ‘proteger’ esses grupos do alcoolismo, enquanto os comerciantes usavam as imagens de araucanos heroicos para estabelecer economias extrativas para os mercados nacionais e internacionais. Os documentos analisados revelam que tanto a população indígena quanto os ‘rotos’ foram retratados por intelectuais e missionários como vítimas indefensas e necessitadas de educação moral, o que buscava legitimar o trabalho missionário. Nesse sentido, as percepções, as práticas sociais e a mobilidade do conhecimento sobre o consumo de álcool resultaram ser um campo muito controverso no contexto da colonização e da incorporação da Araucanía ao Estado chileno.

Palavras-chave: alcoolismo na ciência, colonização, consumo de álcool, cultura indígena, fronteira chilena, trabalho missionário, saúde pública.

Introduction

According to the documentation produced by Chilean and European scientists, politicians, and missionaries, alcoholism on the Chilean frontier turned into a serious problem at the end of the nineteenth century.¹ Scientists, above all physicians, and politicians assessed alcohol consumption—especially that of indigenous and mestizo rural laborers (*rotos*) who immigrated to Araucanía during and after the military occupation of the region by the state (1862-1883), joining former frontiersmen (*fronterizos*) in search of land and work—as highly problematic and called for restrictions in the form of controls or increased penalties for excessive consumption.

Even though alcoholism was a widespread phenomenon in many societies, it started to become a serious health hazard for modern states over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In a sense, drunkenness fueled the incipient sanitizing discourse of modern societies.² Hence, Chile’s social question was significantly associated with alcoholism until well into the twentieth century: In the north, the drunkenness of mining workers;³ in the urban zones of central

1 The quote in the title of this article is taken from Carl Martin, *Landeskunde von Chile* (Hamburg: Verlag L. Friedrichsen & Co., 1909), 175. Direct quotes extracted from texts published in Spanish and German were translated by the author.

2 According to common scientific discourses, alcoholism was introduced as a medical category at the end of the nineteenth century, but it did not become a medical and hygienic problem until it was linked to degeneration theory at the beginning of the twentieth century. See, for instance, Óscar Iván Calvo Isaza and Marta Saade Granados, *La ciudad en cuarentena. Chicha, patología social y profilaxis* (Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 2002). Regarding *chicha*, for the Colombian case, see also Adriana María Alzate Echeverri, “La chicha: entre bálsamo y veneno. Contribución al estudio del vino amarillo en la región central del Nuevo Reino de Granada, siglo XVIII,” *Revista Historia y Sociedad*, n.º 12 (2006): 161-190. Related to the Mexican case and the link between alcohol and the nation-building process, see Deborah Toner, *Alcohol and nationhood in nineteenth-century Mexico* (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 2015). An insightful anthology on alcohol in Latin America in the long run, from the pre-Hispanic and colonial periods to the twenty-first century, with case studies on Guatemala, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile is *Alcohol in Latin America: A social and cultural history*, edited by Gretchen Pierce and Áurea Toxqui (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2014).

3 See Milton Godoy, “Fiesta, borrachera y violencia entre los mineros del Norte chico (1840-1900),” *Revista de Historia Social y de las Mentalidades* 7, n.º 1 (2003): 81-117.

Chile, workers in taverns and *chinganas*;⁴ and in the south, vagrancy of *rotos* and drunkenness of indigenous people.⁵ In this context, a new form of social hierarchization has produced subjects like the *rotos* in Chile who, according to Rolf Foerster, are essentially characterized by indigenous and republican roots, indicating that they are mixed-raced people. Thus, the figure of the mestizo "*roto aindiado*" emerged, a free laborer employed in the factories and the countryside, who colonized the southern territories, coming from central Chile.⁶ In this sense, social problems usually went hand in hand with the stigmatization of *rotos* and indigenous people. This characterization of a particular social type of *borracho* also aimed to create the image of a degenerated society fallen prey to alcohol consumption, even causing economic problems, which was to be remedied. Thus, many intellectuals concluded that the state must begin to take care of problems in the field of public health.⁷

At the same time, the industrialization of alcohol production took hold of Chile in the second half of the nineteenth century, making for a promising economic boom. Marcos Fernández Labbé, in his book *Bebidas alcohólicas en Chile*, has explored and illuminated developments in different economic sectors related to the production, trade, and consumption of alcoholic beverages between 1870 and 1930. Above all, Chilean wine was characterized as a kind of national drink, which was to represent "the good taste" of Chile abroad as an export commodity.⁸ For example, almost 200 cartons of Chilean wines and liquors were shipped to the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1889.⁹

4 See Jorge Navarro López, "Fiesta, alcohol y entretenimiento popular. Crítica y prácticas festivas del partido obrero socialista (Chile, 1912-1922)," *Historia* 52, n.º 1 (2019): 81-107, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0717-71942019000100081>

5 See Mathias Órdenes Delgado, "Sujetos sin voz: historia social del campesinado no indígena (rotos) en La Araucanía posbélica (1883-1941)," *Ayer* 113, n.º 1 (2019): 161-187.

6 Rolf Foerster, "Temor y temblor frente al indio roto," *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, n.º 3 (1992): 39. See also Viviana Gallardo, José Luis Martínez, and Nelson Martínez, "Indios y rotos: El surgimiento de nuevos sujetos en los procesos de construcción identitaria latinoamericana," *Revista UNIVERSUM*, n.º 17 (2002): 173. For an overview of the history of *rotos*, see Órdenes Delgado, "Sujetos sin voz" and Gabriel Salazar, *Labradores, peones y proletarios* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Sur, 1985). The *rotos* had been seeking a livelihood since colonial times. After independence, they moved south and occupied indigenous lands—a process characterized as "spontaneous migration." Later, during the military occupation, a new influx began, which was more extensive than the previous ones. This time, the *rotos* collaborated with the army, participated in the expansion of the railroad, and founded villages. In this context, a distinction should be made between "spontaneous migrants," the former *fronterizos*, who settled along the border line of the Biobío River, and the *rotos* who colonized the south during and after the military occupation, since they were not the same despite sharing the same mestizo origin. See, for instance, Mathias Órdenes Delgado and Mario Samaniego Sastre, "La Araucanía profunda: El problema de la identidad y de la representación de *rotos* y *fronterizos*. De la Guerra de Ocupación a la Posguerra (1862 a la década de 1910)," *Revista de História Regional* 26, n.º 1 (2021): 315, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5212/Rev.Hist.Reg.v.26i1.0012>. Regarding the relationship with indigenous population, see, for instance, José Bengoa, *Historia del pueblo mapuche, siglos XIX y XX* (Santiago de Chile: LOM Ediciones, 2008), 155-170; 327-330, and José Bengoa, *Historia social de la agricultura chilena*, Tomo II (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Sur, 1990), 151-182.

7 Manuel Bastias Saavedra, "Intervención del Estado y derechos sociales. Transformaciones en el pensamiento jurídico chileno en la era de la cuestión social, 1880-1925," *Historia* 48, n.º 1 (2015): 28, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0717-71942015000100001>

8 Marcos Fernández Labbé, *Bebidas alcohólicas en Chile. Una historia económica de su fomento y expansión, 1870-1930* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2010), 13-14.

9 Ministère du Commerce, de l'Industrie et des Colonies, *Exposition universelle internationale de 1889 à Paris. Rapports du jury international, publiés sous la direction de M. Alfred Picard. Classe 73 Agronomie, Statistique agricole. Rapport de M. Louis Grandeau* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1892), 201; "Cronica agrícola," *Boletín de la Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura* XX, n.º 3 (1889): 83-85.

In addition to wine, industrially distilled alcohol—obtained from grains or potatoes, from which the strongest and equally cheapest alcoholic beverages could be produced—was declared to be mainly responsible for the “intoxication” of the Chilean society. Likewise, beer became part of the portfolio of beverages produced in Chile from the 1870s onward. Both liquor and beer were mainly produced in the urban zones of central Chile and were part of a small sectoral industrial growth in the south, in the provinces of Valdivia and Llanquihue. Chilean alcohol was henceforth to be exported abroad.¹⁰ To be able to regulate and control the production and sale of alcohol nationwide, the first Alcohol Law was passed in 1902 in response to this industrial boom.

Although the production of alcohol, its trade, as well as its consumption have always played a noteworthy role in the history of Chile’s southern frontier, as of yet, there is no specific research on alcohol and alcoholism in that context.¹¹ In recent historical literature, the Chilean frontier is not conceived as a space of certain social practices and mobility of knowledge, stereotypes or imaginations in the field of medicine and public health. Research interest regarding the frontier has mostly considered the study of territory, questions of law or the landscape of the region.¹² Meanwhile, in the history of science and in particular the history of medicine and public health, literature has specifically addressed the Chilean health system and the study of medicine in the urban areas of central Chile.¹³ Regarding histories of alcohol and alcoholism in Chile, studies by Marcos Fernández Labbé, Juan Ricardo Conyoundjian, Patricio Herrera González and Juan Carlos Yáñez Andrade, among others, are essential research works that should be highlighted. Arguing from a social and economic history perspective, all of them focus on urban areas, especially in central Chile.¹⁴

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- 10 Fernández Labbé, *Bebidas alcohólicas en Chile*, 80-85; Jorge Muñoz Sougarret, “Notas sobre la relación entre alcohol y trabajo en la frontera sur de la Araucanía. Segunda mitad del siglo XIX,” in *Alcohol y Trabajo. El alcohol y la formación de las identidades laborales en Chile. Siglo XIX y XX*, edited by Marcos Fernández L. et al. (Osorno: Editorial Universidad de los Lagos, 2008), 37-62; T.S., “La estadística comercial de 1902 i la agricultura,” *Boletín de la Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura* XXXIV, n° 47 (1903): 799-801.
 - 11 A very brief overview of the colonial period is provided by Sergio Villalobos, *Vida fronteriza en la Araucanía. El mito de la guerra de Arauco* (Santiago de Chile: Andrés Bello, 1995), 121-122.
 - 12 Traditional Chilean social-historical research divides the space into three distinct “frontiers”: a military frontier, a cattle-herding frontier, and an Andean frontier. María Angélica Illanes (2014) has proposed the existence of a fourth frontier characterized by a process of colonization through private property. See, for instance, Manuel Bastias Saavedra, “The Lived Space. Possession, Ownership, and Land Sales on the Chilean Frontier (Valdivia, 1790–1830),” *Historia Crítica* n.º 67 (2018): 3-21, doi: <https://doi.org/10.7440/histcrit67.2018.01>; Martín Correa Cabrera, *La historia del despojo: el origen de la propiedad particular en el territorio mapuche* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Pehuén, 2021). Jürgen Osterhammel has described frontiers as spaces of migration and expansion, led by the movement of missionaries, merchants, and settlers into spaces of indigenous populations. At the same time, the frontier can also be understood as a site of social interaction characterized by different ethnic groups. Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (München: C.H. Beck, 2010), 456-564.
 - 13 For an overview, see María Soledad Zárate Campos and Andrea del Campo, “Curar, prevenir y asistir: Medicina y salud en la historia chilena,” *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* (2014): 1-21, doi: <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.66805>
 - 14 Fernández Labbé, *Bebidas alcohólicas en Chile*; Marcos Fernández Labbé, “Los usos de la taberna: Renta fiscal, combate al alcoholismo y cacicazgo político en Chile. 1870-1930,” *Historia* 39, n.º 2 (2006): 369-429, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0717-71942006000200002>; Marcos Fernández L. et al., editors, *Alcohol y Trabajo. El alcohol y la formación de las identidades laborales en Chile. Siglo XIX y XX* (Osorno: Editorial Universidad de los Lagos, 2008); Patricio Herrera González and Juan Carlos Yáñez Andrade, *Alcohol y trabajo en América Latina, siglos XVII-XX* (Valparaíso: América en Movimiento Editorial, 2019).

Regarding the ethnic classification of indigenous groups and their relation to alcohol, a more deconstructive point of view is offered by Milan Stuchlik's 1985 work on indigenous politics and the image of the *mapuche* in Chile. Stuchlik argues that Chilean elites developed five predominant discursive stereotypes of the *che*¹⁵ in different phases of history: "brave warriors" (until about 1840), "bloodthirsty bandits" (until about 1880), "lazy and drunken folks" (until about 1920), and "poor and needy indigenous people" (until about 1960) who "lacked education" (since 1960).¹⁶ In addition, Ericka Beckman, depicting and reaffirming the existence of Chile's imperial fantasy during the annexations and occupations in the north and south, as well as through the acquisition of the Easter Island in 1888, argues that this "creolized imperial reason" had been structured around flexible and inconsistent discourses of race. On the one hand, Chilean elites affirmed the (relative) whiteness of Chilean *rotos* fighting against *more* indigenous soldiers on the Peruvian and Bolivian side during the War of the Pacific (1879-1883). On the other, elites declared the mixed-race character of *rotos* as responsible for their propensity to alcohol addiction.¹⁷ In fact, both studies show how an upcoming racial discourse had been intermingled with allegations of alcoholism among the *rotos* and the *che*.

Although case studies on alcohol and alcoholism in southern Chile are scarce and, if existent at all, concentrate on economic development,¹⁸ there is a large variety of primary sources and unique aspects to study, such as the discrepancy between practices and representations of alcohol consumption in the context of colonization, which make the Chilean frontier a curious case: The Araucanía region belonged to the state after the military occupation of indigenous lands, completed in 1883. To develop, urbanize, and modernize the south, state actors recruited colonists to settle in these regions and foster the growth of cities such as Temuco or Valdivia. Missionaries also came to "civilize" the *che*, as well as foreign scientists such as engineers, geographers, anthropologists, and linguists, who sought to explore, chart, and study these areas and their people.¹⁹ According to Jorge Pinto Rodríguez, it has always been a space of encounters and otherness, in

15 In fact, the common general term is *mapuche*. However, since this is a generalization of different indigenous groups and, moreover, appears increasingly in sources written in the twentieth century, this paper follows the suggestion of Mónica Contreras Saiz and opts for using the term *che* for the ancestors of the *mapuche*. See Mónica Contreras Saiz, *En nombre de la seguridad. Procesos de securización en el Gulumapu y la Frontera de Chile 1760-1885* (Stuttgart: Hans-Dieter Heinz Verlag, 2016), 45. See also Guillaume Boccara, "Etnogénesis mapuche: resistencia y restructuración entre los indígenas del centro-sur de Chile (siglos XVI-XVIII)," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 79, n.º 3 (1999): 426, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1215/00182168-79.3.425>

16 Milan Stuchlik, "Las políticas indígenas en Chile y la imagen de los mapuches," *CUHSO* 2, n.º 2 (1985): 166. In this context, see also Correa Cabrera, *La historia del despojo*, 343-352. Regarding the perception of the *che* at the beginning of the twentieth century, see Carmen Arellano Hoffmann, "Las opiniones erróneas que... circulan en la capital'. La percepción cultural entre los *wingka* y los mapuches," in *En la Araucanía. El padre Sigifredo de Frauenhäusl y el Parlamento mapuche de Coz Coz de 1907*, edited by Carmen Arellano Hoffmann, Hermann Holzbauer, and Roswitha Kramer (Madrid/ Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 2006), 113-150.

17 Ericka Beckman, "The creolization of imperial reason: Chilean state racism in the war of the Pacific," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 18, n.º 1 (2009): 83-86, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569320902819786>

18 Muñoz Sougarret, *Notas sobre la relación entre alcohol y trabajo*; Luis Carreño, "Aguardiente y ganado. La presencia del Estado en La Araucanía y Las Pampas," *Boletín del Museo y Archivo Histórico Municipal de Osorno* VII (2005): 93-95.

19 See Héctor Mora Nawrath and Mario Samaniego Sastre, *El pueblo mapuche en la pluma de los araucanistas. Seis estudios sobre construcción de la alteridad* (Santiago de Chile: Ocho Libros Editores, 2018).

which representations of land, space, and territory were polysemic and disputed.²⁰ Furthermore, the Chilean frontier can be characterized as a zone of “clusters of intensified change”²¹ during a short period at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. On the one hand, this was a time of a great increase in scientific “knowledge.” It was also a period of disappearing rituals and practices related to hygiene, in a region whose natural resources became subject to economic and political interests. By the 1930s, when the Chilean state established sufficient rule in southern Chile, the status of the frontier had effectively come to an end. In fact, the incorporation of the southern frontier into the Chilean state brought with it an important colonization process during the period under review that influenced the way in which different actors with interests in the Araucanía read and classified indigenous and mestizo settlers.

This article aims to describe and analyze the perceptions and representations²² of alcohol consumption on the Chilean frontier in the context of the colonization process described above, by using primary sources produced as part of the activities undertaken by politicians, missionaries, scientists, and travelers. The objective is to present a case study of a less researched region in the field of the history of medicine and public health, depicting the perception of two social groups: the indigenous population and the Chilean colonists called *rotos*, who settled down at the frontier after the military occupation of the Araucanía. The documents analyzed reveal that, from the perspective of contemporary accounts, the indigenous population as well as Chilean colonists became evidence of a degenerate society. They were portrayed and represented as drunks and victims of uncontrolled alcohol outbreaks. Regarding the indigenous population, this representation questions the image of the heroic and victorious *che* of the colonial period (called *araucanos* at that time), who successfully resisted the Spanish and the Republican military until the final occupation of the Chilean frontier in the 1860s and 1870s. Nevertheless, some primary sources evidence attempts to prevent the *che* from excessive alcohol consumption and to protect their culture and traditions. Others try to maintain the image of the heroic *araucano* of ancient times—at least for economic reasons. Drawing on the work of Jorge Muñoz Sougarret, as well as María Fernanda Vásquez and Marco Gaspari,²³ among others, this article argues that the readings of different observers

20 Jorge Pinto Rodríguez, “Concepción y la Araucanía en el siglo XIX, un proceso de regionalización frustrada,” in *Región y Nación. La construcción provincial de Chile: Siglo XIX*, edited by Armando Cartes Montory (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 2020), 321-357; Jorge Pinto Rodríguez, *Araucanía y pampas: un mundo fronterizo en América del Sur* (Temuco: Universidad de la Frontera, 1996).

21 Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*, 115.

22 Following Roger Chartier, representation is understood as the instrument of a mediated knowledge, an “image” of an entity capable of recalling it and “painting” it as it is. A decipherable relation is then postulated between the visible sign and the signified referent, which does not mean that it is deciphered as it should be. Roger Chartier, *El mundo como representación. Estudios sobre historia cultural* (Barcelona: Editorial Gedisa, 2005, 57-58).

23 María Fernanda Vásquez demonstrates for the Colombian case the construction of a racial imaginary, highlighting the relationship between indigenous legacy and excessive consumption of alcohol; see María Fernanda Vásquez, “Degeneración, criminalidad y heredo-alcoholismo en Colombia, primera mitad del siglo XX,” *Saúde Soc.* 27, n.º 2 (2018): 338-353, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-12902018180137>. Marco Gaspari uses the Peruvian example to show the need for elites to establish some form of social control over indigenous communities. Hence, drunkenness became an evident symptom of a dying culture of the “other”; see Marco Gaspari, “Reflexión histórico-antropológica sobre las prácticas de consumo de alcohol en el Perú andino. Entre arqueología histórica y estereotipos sobre el indio borracho por naturaleza,” *Cultura y Representaciones Sociales* 14, n.º 28 (2020): 9-32. In this context, see also Thierry Saignes, editor, *Borrachera y memoria. La experiencia de lo sagrado en los Andes* (Lima: Institut français d’études andines/HISBOL, 1993).

formulated about alcohol consumption in southern Chile reveal how the intense process of occupation and colonization influenced social perceptions and social hierarchies. The reading and consequent perceptions generated among and by observers such as explorers, politicians, and missionaries—carried out between 1880 and 1930 as part of the incorporation of the territory into the state—resulted in the consolidation of socio-racial hierarchies that, in a sense, were already existent, mainly based on stigmatized perceptions of alcohol consumption. This activity was associated with a perceived moral decadence and uncivilized character of the *rotos* and the indigenous population, which, in the long run, had no other purpose than to facilitate or justify control over these groups by state representatives, the industry, landowners, and missionaries. While alcohol consumption was acceptable for certain populations, as evidenced by the simultaneous rise of the wine industry, it was reprehensible for the *che* and *rotos*.²⁴ In this sense, perceptions, social practices, and the mobility of knowledge on alcohol consumption proved to be a highly disputed field in the context of colonization and the incorporation of Araucania into the Chilean state, as well as a way of consolidating social hierarchies.

I will present this argument in three parts. First, I will provide a brief overview of how indigenous people and their relation to alcohol were portrayed in the colonial era, to present the example of the *che* and their image as heroic people of ancient times throughout the investigation period. In Part 2, I argue that this representation contrasts the imagination and description of indigenous populations and *rotos* as drunken and degenerated people in the discourse on public health and modernity. In Part 3, I argue that, in accordance with discussions on alcohol consumption on the Chilean frontier by capuchin missionaries, indigenous people were turned into vulnerable actors in need of protection, whereas *rotos* became less spotlighted in scientific and political discussions.

1. From *indio borracho* to heroic *araucano* and back

To trace the processes of imagination and representation of indigenous populations regarding alcohol and alcoholism in the era of exploding sciences, the time frame is widened beyond the described period to include the colonial era and the early nineteenth century in the *longue durée*. Unlike the *che*, mestizo settlers already living in indigenous territories along the Biobío River and the coast (*fronterizos*) received less attention from the Spanish-Creole before the Chilean War of Independence (1810-1826). In this context, they can be considered a subaltern social group, although their significant number exceeded that of the *che* in different localities on the southern frontier, an area that stretched from the Pacific coast to the Andes and from the Biobío River in the north to the island of Chiloé in the south.²⁵

Moreover, since the early colonial era, Spanish and Creole writers from across Spanish America associated indigenous culture with drunkenness. In addition, sources from after the Independencies in Latin America reveal the persistence of this discursive tendency. Hence, the Spanish and

24 See Saignes, *Borrachera y memoria*, 44-49.

25 See Órdenes Delgado and Samaniego Sastre, "La Araucanía profunda," 319-324. In the words of Mónica Contreras Saiz, diversity and heterogeneity were two characteristics of the frontier, whose jurisdiction lays with the Province of Concepción at the end of the eighteenth century. It is estimated that about 200,000 people lived on the frontier at that time, about 45% of them were *che*. Three ecosystems can be identified for this area: the flat coastal regions in the west, large forests (*selvas*) and valleys, and finally the volcanoes and the Andes in the east; see Contreras Saiz, *En nombre de la seguridad*, 68-92, especially 68-72.

Creole discourse on indigenous alcohol consumption can be helpful to analyze the representations of indigenous culture in the post-Conquest period. Such a discourse—despite continuous denunciations from the sixteenth century to present—is not homogeneous in its understanding of drunkenness nor in its explanations.²⁶

On the one hand, certain writers of the early colonial era described indigenous people as weak on alcohol, interpreting it as a sign of devilry. For most Spaniards, *indios* could not be good Christians. Thus, in 1618, King Felipe III enacted a law that allowed punishing a native with one day of prison and six to eight lashes “who misses mass on a feast day, or gets drunk, or commits another similar offense.”²⁷ While in the early colonial period it seemed important above all to reduce alcohol consumption of indigenous populations so that they could become faith-abiding Christians, in the late colonial period the principle of order played a pivotal role: controlling the sale of alcohol and its consumption was intended to ensure the disciplining of the population.²⁸

This changed significantly in the decades after the independencies from Spain, when Aztecs, Incas, and Araucanians “were evoked in countless works of propaganda that stressed not only their heroic qualities but also their commitment to the insurgent cause.”²⁹ In the Chilean case, it was Alonso de Ercilla’s epic poem *La Araucana*, written in the sixteenth century, that most famously promoted the image of brave indigenous warriors—“so haughty, gallant and bellicose”³⁰—resisting the Spanish conquistadores in early colonial times. Hence, the *Araucana* became the first reference across the independent Americas to symbolize the heroic attitude of indigenous people and to show their glory. Thus, in the interest of the elites, Ercilla’s work conveyed a different image of indigenous people: that of heroic warriors fighting against the Spanish Empire. In this context, also the *roto* became a key actor in Chile’s transition toward a truly modern and “civilized” state after the War of the Pacific (1879-1883) by being included as the “son of Araucanos” into an upcoming “mythologization of the pre-conquest indigenous past.”³¹ This image was contrary to the notion of *indio borracho*, who became a symbolic figure for barbarism during the nineteenth century that inhibited them from being civilized and being a civilized nation.

According to Luis Navarrete, secretary of the General Intendancy of the Chilean Army, and Conrado Ríos, surgeon of the Military School and the War Academy in Santiago, alcoholism became a serious problem with the beginning of the occupation:

The ancient Araucania has been conquered by alcohol, rather than by the intellectual and civilizing efforts of man. The Indians have been and continue to be poisoned by the manufacturers

26 Rebecca Earle, “Algunos pensamientos sobre ‘El indio borracho’ en el imaginario criollo,” *Revista de Estudios Sociales* n.º 29 (2008): 18-27.

27 King Felipe III, Madrid, 10 October 1618, law XVI, in *Recopilación de leyes de los reynos de las Indias* (Madrid: Roix Editor, (1841 [1791]), II: 230. For more examples, see Earle, “Algunos pensamientos,” 21.

28 Earle, “Algunos pensamientos,” 21; Villalobos, *Vida fronteriza en la Araucanía*, 122.

29 Rebecca Earle, *The Return of the Native. Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America, 1810-1930* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2007), 29.

30 Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga, *La Araucana* (Salamanca: En casa de Domingo de Portonarijs, 1574), Canto I, verso 46.

31 Beckman, “The creolization of imperial reason,” 86. For the Colombian case, in particular, see Jane Rausch, “Latin American Frontier History: The Colombian Case,” *Lateinamerika Studien* 19 (1985): 91.

of alcohol. Hardly a few thousand of that striving race whose glories were sung by Ercilla, their enemy, remain today.³²

The return of indigenous people as “noble savage,” resistance fighters against the Spaniards and, thus, national heroes, did not last long as a narrative—at least not for the elites and representatives of the Chilean state. After all, it was the state that occupied and ultimately “pacified” the descendants of its own national heroes such as Lautaro or Caupolicán during the conquest of the south in the 1860s and 1870s. On a cultural level, however, this narrative was not going to disappear so swiftly and formed a counterpoint to the increasingly dominant discourse of a degenerated society.

Especially after occupations in the south, the image of southern Chile as “conquered by alcohol” influenced the fear of national elites of degenerating as a society and becoming sick, crossbreed, and mestizo-like, and therefore less civilized. The growing awareness of “sick societies” throughout modernity fostered the construction of a strategic comparison with less developed societies in non-Western countries by North American and European scientists, and in the Chilean case, by elites regarding the southern territories. At the same time, the Chilean state demeaned indigenous practices and rituals of hygiene within its own territory to outline the progressiveness of a seemingly “modern state.” High mortality rates, the spread of infectious diseases, and the professionalization of medicine were important factors for growing state intervention in health issues, which were finally formally enshrined in the Constitution of 1925.³³

In the meantime, although indigenous religious and medical practices in rural areas were perceived as backward and “remains of barbarism,” especially by state actors, pharmacists and scientists in urban areas were consciously and gradually trying to include “indigenous knowledge” and, beyond this association with indigeneity, “the charisma of the exotic and the strange”³⁴ in a growing global market. One example is the *Aperitivo medicinal* “El Araucano”, a liquor distilled by German pharmacist Fritz Hausser since the 1920s in Valparaíso with herbs from the south. At the same time, the indigenous population was excluded from a growingly popular “modern life”; social segregation and attempts to demarcate the center and periphery were its most aggressive consequences. However, indigenous practices generated great scientific interest within the Chilean and European academic world. Practices and properties were well known by healers and herbalists who kept this knowledge secret.³⁵

32 Luis A. Navarrete, *El Alcohol, el Alcoholismo i su Represion por Luis A. Navarrete, Secretario de la Intendencia Jeneral del Ejército y Dr. Conrado Rios V., Cirujano de la Escuela Militar i de la Academia de Guerra. Memoria presentada al concurso abierto por el Ministerio de Hacienda por decreto de 14 de abril de 1897 i designada para el primer premio ex-aequo por la comision informante* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Nacional, 1899), 104.

33 Claudio Llanos Reyes and María Fernanda Lanfranco, “La discusión política sobre mortalidad infantil en Chile durante la década de 1930. Elementos para una aproximación histórico política,” *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 74, n.º 2 (2017): 675-703, doi: <https://doi.org/10.3989/aeamer.2017.2.10>; Bastias Saavedra, “Intervención del Estado y derechos sociales,” 23-28.

34 Stefanie Gänger, “World Trade in Medicinal Plants from Spanish America, 1717-1815,” *Medical History* 59, n.º 1 (2015): 62, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/mdh.2014.70>

35 See Carolina Valenzuela Matus, “The Secret Knowledge of the ‘Others’: the Mapuche Healers in the Works of Alonso de Ovalle and Juan Ignacio Molina,” in *Il Mito del Nemico. Identità, alterità e loro rappresentazioni*, edited by Irene Graziani and Maria Vittoria Spissu (Bologna: Minerva, 2019), 348.

In contrast to the aspect of “sick society” at the end of the nineteenth century as a phenomenon on a global scale, certain local and regional dynamics constructed the image of “sick people” instead: the *che*, who were seen as a degenerated ethnic group that had rapidly turned into the “shadows of past glories.”³⁶ In order to resolve the contradiction between the heroic Araucanian, on the one hand, and the degenerate and alcoholic *che*, on the other, the glorious past of the indigenous culture was, in a sense, separated from their present. The glorious was associated—at best—with a pre-modern past in sources of the time.³⁷ For instance, a German migrant, Carl Martin, who worked as a physician in Puerto Montt and depicted the landscape of science, medicine, and politics in Southern Chile and beyond, wrote the following in his book published in 1909: “It seems that none [...] is under the illusion of being able to maintain the Mapuche people, once so proud. With few exceptions, these remnants of the ancient Araucanian people can be counted among the lowest class of people.”³⁸

Martin helps build a broader understanding of different social and cultural relations between various actors in the frontier. His oeuvre opens a particularly fruitful space to study local and trans-regional connections between colonists, indigenous people, tradesmen, missionaries, and scientists, and how German migrants acted in such a heterogeneous setting. Similarly, Eliodoro Yáñez, deputy of Valdivia, had also informed the Chamber of Deputies in Santiago in 1899 that “the robust Araucanians, after resisting for more than three centuries the thrust of arms and modern civilization, have fallen traitorously wounded by impure alcohol, without the public authorities having taken a step to avoid this inhuman crime.”³⁹

Although Chilean elites connected modernity and civilization with European and North American societies during the nineteenth century, it was the European settlers—German and Swiss settlers in particular—who imported alcohol production to Chile and, especially, to the south. Thus, beer production in the province of Valdivia and beyond became a small but important sectoral industry and culture. The Anwandter brewery might be the best-known example.⁴⁰ In 1904, Nicolás Palacios, a physician profoundly influenced by Darwinian and Spencerian evolutionism, wrote in his *Raza chilena* that “[i]t is well known that the custom of drinking is, in Europe, peculiar to the superior nations.” For Palacios, it is the discovery of the industrial manufacture of alcohol that “has lowered the price of this intoxicant to the point of allowing a day laborer to get drunk with a few cents.”⁴¹ The industrial production of alcohol on the frontier and in urban Chile (Santiago and Valparaíso) was closely linked to the immigration of German

36 Stefanie Gänger, *Relics of the Past. The Collecting and Study of Pre-Columbian Antiquities in Peru and Chile, 1837-1911* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 191.

37 Earle, “Algunos pensamientos,” 23.

38 Martin, *Landeskunde von Chile*, 430.

39 Eliodoro Yáñez, *Documentos Parlamentarios. La cuestión de los alcoholes. Exposición presentada a la cámara de diputados por el señor Eliodoro Yáñez, diputado por Valdivia* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Nacional, 1899), 22.

40 Juan Ricardo Couyoumdjian, “Una bebida moderna: La cerveza en Chile en el siglo XIX,” *Historia* 37, n.º 2 (2004): 311-336, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0717-71942004000200002>; Patricio Bernedo, “Los industriales alemanes de Valdivia 1850-1914,” *Historia* 32 (1999): 5-42; Gustave Verniory, *Diez años en Araucanía 1889-1899* (Santiago de Chile: Pehuén, 2001), 81.

41 Nicolás Palacios, *Raza chilena. Libro escrito por un chileno y para los chilenos*, 2 vols. (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Chilena, 1918), II, 216.

and Swiss settlers, tradesmen, and merchants. According to Palacios, they should not be in any relation to the indigenous population.⁴²

For instance, as mentioned above, German pharmacist Fritz Hausser opened a small business in Valparaíso with his own invented distilled and plant-based liquor called “El Araucano,” which is still sold in Chile and beyond today. Another example is the “Bitter de los Indios Araucanos,” a fever-reducing restorative tonic, prepared by Carmela Rivera V. en Valparaíso. As the brands’ advertisement declares, Carmela Rivera is surely “the only holder of the true original recipe” (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Bitter de los Indios Araucanos



Source: “Bitter de los Indios Araucanos”, trademark registered by Carmela Rivera, Valparaíso, 1899. Accessed 30 September 2021, available at *Gramhir*, <https://gramhir.com/media/2107729953513839988>

42 Palacios, *Raza chilena*, II, 226.

Displaying the picture of a strong *indio*, naked except for a loincloth, opulent jewelry, and feathers, the brand underlines the image of the heroic *araucano* of a pre-independence glorious past.⁴³ Although he stands there with his hands cut off (the axe leans in the background), which, according to Stuchlik, underscores the image of the bloodthirsty indigenous man in the nineteenth century,⁴⁴ his gaze is determined and clear. Consumers are drawn to this heroic past with lettering on both sides of the painting that tells of the three-hundred-year struggle against the Spaniards. These inscriptions promise the buyers of this bitter power and recovery, which lies dormant in the secret of the ancient recipe:

This precious liquor whose preparation is due to the coincidental discovery of an ancient Indian recipe religiously preserved by the family of an old Cacique, owes its valuable tonic properties to the medicinal principles extracted from plants and roots of the Araucanian jungle.

In the continuous wars that the Araucanian tribes maintained among themselves, as well as in the heroic struggle that for three centuries they sustained against the Spanish Conquistadors, they took this elixir to replenish the strength of their wounded and accelerate convalescence.

Alcohol and plant-based remedies like Hausser's "El Araucano" or Rivera's bitter intended to be affiliated with indigeneity and the exotic. In 1899, when Rivera's bitter was registered in Valparaíso, the figure of the heroic and strong indigenous cacique had already become so "strange" that costumers were encouraged to buy this "exotic" product as a promising remedy and cure for fever. Also, the promise of using an ancient and secret recipe that had proven itself for centuries aroused the interest of an urban Chilean upper class that learnt to enjoy this bitter at the turn of the century.

2. *Rotos, che*, and the scientific debate on alcohol consumption and public health

When Vicente Dognino Oliveri was a young man doing his military service at the frontier, he witnessed some tragic alcohol-related deaths. He tells of a soldier who died after two glasses of *ron jamaica* and of a sick man whom, as a budding physician, he could no longer help after drinking half a bottle of this potion. As these kinds of everyday cases are "examples of sudden intoxication that leave no room for doubt,"⁴⁵ Dognino Oliveri pleaded for political change "mainly in the southern regions, where alcohol is abused to the point of threatening the organization and vigor of the race."⁴⁶

This awareness of a sick and degenerated society had been reflected on throughout the country by physicians, politicians, and pharmacists. Especially, descriptions of indigenous populations

43 Even if the brand clearly announces an *araucano*, the image of the man with feathers on his head rather testifies to a member of a North American indigenous group, since feathers are not part of the *che* traditions. Therefore, text and image do not match in this case.

44 Stuchlik, "Las políticas indígenas en Chile," 173-176.

45 Vicente Dognino Oliveri, "Medicina: El alcoholismo en Chile: Memoria de prueba para optar al grado de Licenciado en la Facultad de Medicina i Farmacia, leída el 6 de julio de 1887," *Anales de la Universidad de Chile* 73, n.º 1 (1888): 9.

46 Dognino Oliveri, "Medicina: El alcoholismo en Chile," 5.

and *rotos* as drunken and degenerated people can be found in documents between the 1880s and the 1910s, when discourse on public health and modernity in Chile reached its peak. At the turn of the century, a physiological and social view of the harmful effects of alcohol on humans dominated the scientific environment. On the other hand, alcoholism was also perceived as a clinical pathology that associated drunken behavior with insanity and criminal tendencies. As the *Revista Médica de Chile* stated in 1892, criminality was interpreted as "a disease that attacks the social organism; it has its etiology, its own symptoms, its prophylaxis, its special treatment."⁴⁷ Accordingly, physicians like Salvador Feliú Gana declared alcoholism as a "more terrible scourge than cholera and the plague."⁴⁸ Even syphilis, "seen everywhere" and as a venereal virus "considered as the perennial source of the most varied diseases that came to present," was not declared to be as dangerous for humans as alcoholism "that dominates the morbid scene."⁴⁹ From a scientific point of view, alcoholism was seen as a problem of the working classes in urban Chile and, therefore, a social problem. Furthermore, those who knew about the urban realities transferred their interpretations to the *rotos* in rural areas in the south.⁵⁰ Just as the case of indigenous people, the *rotos* on the frontier were given very similar characterizations by their contemporaries. For instance, physicians like Adeodato Garcia painted the image of a strong working class from past times that became victim of alcohol and poverty, when he gave his speech at a Scientific Congress in Concepción in 1896: "The formidable figure of our historical *roto chileno* has passed into legend; instead, we see everywhere decrepit men, human pieces covered with rags, beggars dead of hunger and thirst, filthy wretches that smell of rot and aguardiente."⁵¹

Ultimately, the image of a degenerate society that had long outlived its cultural prime prevailed. Alcoholism as a social problem became the subject of manifold observations at the frontier to study the manifestations, habits, and consequences of drunkenness: "Our *roto* drinks, first, his week's wages and then converts work utensils to shoes into a few cents,"⁵² Luis Navarrete and Conrado Rios lamented. According to scientists and politicians, alcoholism, interpreted as a "social plague,"⁵³ became mainly a problem in rural areas of the south and concerned, above all, men: woodcutters, craftsmen, and day laborers,⁵⁴ that is to say, mainly people without land. "They move across the land like a consuming fire, leaving nothing behind but a pile of empty tin cans and

47 Sociedad Médica, "Alcoholismo y Criminalidad," *Revista Médica de Chile* XX, n.º 3 (1892): 191.

48 Salvador Feliú Gana, "Medicina: El alcohol considerado como causas de las afecciones hepáticas: Memoria de prueba para optar el grado de Licenciado en la Facultad de Medicina," *Anales de la Universidad de Chile* 55, n.º 1 (1879): 365.

49 Feliú Gana, "Medicina: El alcohol considerado," 365.

50 In the words of Mathias Órdenes Delgado and Mario Samaniego Sastre, the *rotos* on the frontier were left out of the constitution of private property until 1898, when a law was finally passed in favor of national colonization. At that time, the best-quality and best-located lands already had owners. Consequently, the impossibility of finding free lands or to keep their lands pushed a high number of *fronterizos* and *rotos* to emigrate to Argentina; see "La Araucanía profunda," 324-328. See also Correa Cabrera, *La historia del despojo*.

51 Adeodato Garcia V., *El Alcohol: Breves consideraciones medico-sociales sobre su influencia en Chile por el Dr. Adeodato Garcia V. Discurso leído en el Congreso Científico Jeneral Chileno celebrado en Concepción del 23 al 28 de Febrero de 1896* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta i encuadernación Roma, 1896), 15.

52 Navarrete, *El Alcohol, el Alcoholismo i su Represion*, 116.

53 Palacios, *Raza chilena*, I, 40.

54 Carl Martin, "Über den jetzigen Stand der Kolonialverhältnisse in Chile," *Mitteilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft für Thüringen zu Jena, zugleich Organ des Botanischen Vereins für Gesamtthüringen* VIII (1890): 175.

broken bottles,”⁵⁵ as Carl Martin described it in accordance with Isidoro Errázuriz, General Agent of Colonization and former Minister.

In fact, drunkenness on the Chilean frontier was mainly connected with working conditions and compensation. As Jorge Muñoz Sougarret has shown it, landowners (*latifundistas*), European colonists, and other employers in tanneries, distilleries, taverns, breweries or factories paid their workers mostly with alcohol—many of whom belonged to the indigenous population. Especially, industrial fabricated liquors became a common medium of exchange, as their prices remained stable for a long time.⁵⁶ Here, German immigrants played a major role, as the small but growing industrial sector of breweries and distilleries was essentially dominated by them. Otto Bürger, a German zoologist and botanist who worked at the Universidad de Chile at the turn of the century, stated that men and women became more and more addicted to alcohol:

Drinking addiction increased with the emergence of distilleries in the province of Valdivia, which was initiated by German immigrants. Men and women soon preferred schnapps to any other drink: in the grocery store, on the march, in the hut, schnapps were their favorite refreshment. Above all, however, alcohol was drunk in banquets, in which women also took an active part.⁵⁷

In the words of Jorge Muñoz Sougarret, labor would have been for many people on the frontier—settlers and the *che*—the only way to obtain freedom, through wage, which was the gateway to consumption and allowed individuals to gain for themselves independence and security as well as recognition and self-esteem in relation to others.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the poverty of the indigenous population and Chilean settlers, who counted as *mestizos* or *aindiados* for many writers,⁵⁹ became part of the social question on the frontier. In fact, for the poor, being paid with alcohol could even mean a complete meal and replace water where there was no drinking water whatsoever.⁶⁰ Some decades later, in the 1920s, scientists refuted this assumption, pointing out that alcohol could not produce force or could not count as a meal.⁶¹ Also in this context, land issues played an important role. At the end, those who managed to keep their property and did not emigrate to Argentina lived a very precarious life, always on the verge of losing everything.⁶²

With the intention to provide help for poor populations in these regions, missionaries were called on, who had played an important role on the frontier since the Spanish attempt to conquer the region. In addition to evangelizing the indigenous population, civilization was especially important in the nineteenth century. Just as public health problems, moral issues were to be resolved through greater state intervention.⁶³ The welfare of the poor also became an argument to

55 Martin, *Landeskunde von Chile*, 447.

56 Muñoz Sougarret, *Notas sobre la relación entre alcohol y trabajo*, 46-49, 55.

57 Otto Bürger, *Acht Lehr- und Wanderjahre in Chile. Mit 31 Vollbildern und 6 Abbildungen im Text* (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Theodor Weicher, 1909), 87.

58 Muñoz Sougarret, *Notas sobre la relación entre alcohol y trabajo*, 47.

59 Palacios, *Raza chilena*, I, 34; Gallardo, Martínez, and Martínez, “Indios y rotos,” 175.

60 Muñoz Sougarret, *Notas sobre la relación entre alcohol y trabajo*, 50.

61 Bernardo Gentilini, *El Alcoholismo. Artículos ilustrativos, para una campaña anti-alcohólica* (Santiago de Chile: Apostolado de la Prensa, 1920), 73.

62 Órdenes Delgado and Samaniego Sastre, “La Araucanía profunda,” 335-336.

63 Bastias Saavedra, “Intervención del Estado y derechos sociales,” 26.

legitimize missions on the frontier, where the state was only present in rudimentary form. Above all, for the Franciscans and—from the second half of the nineteenth century—for the Capuchins also, this task became a primary focus of their activities.⁶⁴ Francisco Uribe, prefect of the Franciscan missions, wrote in 1884:

At the present time, it seems that the Indians no longer think of recovering their beloved savaged independence: perhaps because they see that it is impossible for them, in attention to their present state of poverty in which they have been left by the continuous expeditions of armed troops, which was necessary to make among them during their insurrections, or because they are persuaded of their inferiority. The fact is that now they are submissive to the authorities of the country, they listen with pleasure to the instructions of the missionary, they are interested in educating their children and that these learn some industrial trade, etc.⁶⁵

Although this quote should not be given too much weight in the overall analysis, since it is primarily intended to justify the missions, it still shows how effectively poverty became a problem on the frontier. In fact, poverty and alcoholism mutually defined one another: "Alcohol has caused virile and strong races to change into weak and apathetic ones, incapable of resisting foreign domination," mentioned Manuel Victoriano Cifuentes in 1899. "Therefore, it has rightly been said that alcohol did more to the *pacificación* of the Araucanians than the numerous Spaniards."⁶⁶

Even though many contemporaries identified alcoholism as a social problem, drunkenness was thought to cause other problems or—let us say—"real" diseases like tuberculosis because of "the frequent heavy soaking in the humid, stormy weather of southern Chile."⁶⁷ Also, madness, hysteria, and epilepsy were declared to be a direct consequence of alcoholism.⁶⁸ High infant mortality rate, which became a huge problem in whole Chile at the turn of the century, is a particular example that shows how the supposed pathological and social causes of alcoholism have been used as arguments to explain these high rates in southern Chile. "The unsteady migratory life" of the indigent population and the poor—miners, and rural workers—"as well as the ever-recurring change to which the nutrition of the families is subjected, primarily endangers the health and life of the

64 While Jesuits (until their expulsion in 1767) and Franciscans established mission stations from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, especially around Valdivia, the Chilean state enlisted the Italian Capuchin order in 1848 to evangelize and civilize various social groups in the south. In addition, the Italian Capuchins were supported by Bavarian Capuchins from 1896. However, it was not only Catholic orders that sent missionaries to the Araucania. Like Bavarian Capuchins, Anglicans also came to the region from 1896. See André Menard Poupin and Jorge Pavez Ojeda, *Mapuche y anglicanos: vestigios fotográficos de la Misión Araucana de Kepe, 1896-1908* (Santiago de Chile: Ocho Libros Editores, 2007).

65 Fr. Francisco Uribe B., "Memoria del Prefecto de Misiones franciscanas de Chile, Angol, Enero 10 de 1884," in *Misiones entre los araucanos: memoria de los prefectos (documentos)*, s. XIX, edited by Fr. Juan R. Rovigno S. (Santiago de Chile: Archivo Franciscano, 2001), 53.

66 Manuel Victoriano Cifuentes, *Breves consideraciones sobre el alcoholismo y la penalidad de la embriaguez* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta y Encuadernación del Comercio, 1899), 4. In comparison, Eduardo Iraola argues for the Argentine case that alcohol became a kind of *negocio pacífico* on the southern frontier; see Eduardo Iraola, "Borrachera y violencia en las milicias de la frontera del Buenos Aires tardocolonial," *Anuario PROEHA*, n.º 1 (2015), 28.

67 Martin, *Landeskunde von Chile*, 406. See also Gentilini, *El Alcoholismo*, 62.

68 Martin, *Landeskunde von Chile*, 409; Joaquín Talavera, *El Alcoholismo por el Dr. Joaquín Talavera tomado en los archivos del Consejo departamental de higiene de Valparaíso* (Valparaíso: Imprenta y Litografía Central, 1896).

younger children,” as explained by Martin, who also complained of the following: “In general, they do not observe any rule of a reasonable lifestyle. Drunkenness [...], extremely inadequate housing, prejudices of all kinds, etc., give rise to a number of evils which hit the shelter-bound infants and smaller children especially hard.”⁶⁹

In contrast to his compatriot Carl Martin, Otto Bürger distinguished between the indigenous population, which he described as very clean, and the lower classes: “The Araucanians have always bathed their children, which the lower-class Chileans do not do, and therefore, in spite of all lapses and negligence, infant mortality is lower than in the Chile of culture.”⁷⁰ Hence, during the 1920s and 1930s, physicians and hygienists proclaimed a higher infant mortality and delays in development among families of drinkers, especially if the mother was addicted to alcohol.⁷¹ Furthermore, the discourse on infant mortality and life conditions on the frontier in the early decades of the twentieth century exemplify the role of nutrition in the context of alcohol consumption. A broadly accepted consensus in scientific circles indicated that the industrially fabricated *aguardiente* was the most dangerous with disastrous impact on local society: “In all the extension of the country, there are factories of this product, especially on the frontier, and it is also there where it is causing its greatest havoc,” wrote Dognino Oliveri in 1888, explaining that “this *aguardiente* is extracted from everything: potatoes, rotten wheat, decomposing flour, ryegrass, and even human excrement.”⁷²

On the contrary, Eliodoro Yáñez, deputy of Valdivia and advocate of the local industrial sector of distilleries in southern Chile, highlighted the importance of secondary sectors alongside these factories:

In the provinces of Valdivia and Llanquihue, an average of 15,000 pigs are fattened in various factories. To fatten these pigs, wastes from the distillation stills are used, which allows fattening them at little cost and selling the product of these butcheries at a relatively cheap price, provided especially to the working class of the north, which thus obtains a healthy and low-priced food.⁷³

Beside the meat industry, the cutting of firewood on the frontier was largely dependent on distilleries in southern Chile, since firewood was needed for fuel in those factories in cities like Valdivia, Osorno or Puerto Montt. Not least of all, the manufacture of paints, varnishes, pharmaceutical products, extracts, dyes, and perfumery was also highly connected to industrial alcohol production on the frontier.⁷⁴

The fact that large parts of the local population on the frontier lived in poverty, and in some cases even in hunger, ultimately reveals a paradox: Colonists, employers, and high-ranking politicians were more interested in the yield of alcohol distilled from grains and potatoes than in protecting the people whose lives had taken a turn for the worse due to immense alcohol consumption and the loss of their lands. In addition, according to Milan Stuchlik, fueling the stereotype of lazy and

69 Martin, *Landeskunde von Chile*, 404.

70 Bürger, *Acht Lehr- und Wanderjahre in Chile*, 85.

71 Cora Frances Stoddard, *Verdades modernas sobre el alcohol* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Siglo XX, 1921), 7-13.

72 Dognino Oliveri, “Medicina: El alcoholismo en Chile,” 9.

73 Yáñez, *Documentos Parlamentarios*, 65.

74 Yáñez, *Documentos Parlamentarios*, 66, 67.

drunk *che*, especially by intellectuals and economic elites, rendered the advantage of blaming the indigenous population as being guilty of their own misery.⁷⁵

3. Helping the poor: Alcoholism and land property issues on the frontier

The social status in the north of the country differs a lot from that in the south. Here, the initiatives often take unusual turns because the idea of quick fortune dominates the spirits. The incomplete division of property, the influx of a population animated by that purpose, favor violent clashes of conflicting interests, official improbity, and anarchy of society, thus moved by unhinged forces. The least apt to sustain this fight, of transient effects, is the Indian; hence the necessity to present him greater protection.⁷⁶

Resulting from previous discussions and observations made by politicians, scientists, and physicians concerning alcohol consumption and alcoholism on the frontier, land property was declared the second issue in need of being resolved. Tomás Guevara, an ethnographer and teacher in Temuco, characterized the indigenous population as victim of regional conflicts, especially regarding territorial questions, as it appears in the quotation at the beginning of this section. Claiming protection and economic advancement for indigenous culture, Guevara affirmed that "their moral improvement" was to become "a natural consequence."⁷⁷ Like many other intellectuals of his time, Guevara portrayed the indigenous population as infantile and unevolved in comparison to others. In this context, the consumption of alcohol played a significant role, generating a "true pathological issue" in local society.⁷⁸ For Guevara, "barbarians" neither changed nor developed for centuries; because of clashing with modernity, they would soon disappear.⁷⁹ In fact, the relation between alcohol consumption and questions of property on the frontier turned out to be a serious matter.⁸⁰

Although a first alcohol law was passed in 1902, it did not provide any protection for indigenous peoples or other groups. Six years prior, Joaquín Talavera argued that a law would finally lower crime statistics, reduce cases of hysteria and epilepsy, and liberate hospital beds as well as places in insane asylums.⁸¹ For decades to come, a discussion about measures to prevent alcoholism among the indigenous population dominated the political stage. On the one hand, physicians like Talavera held that the main purpose was to improve the welfare of this population and their health, through restrictions on alcohol consumption. Others supported the alcohol industry, in

75 Stuchlik, "Las políticas indígenas en Chile," 180.

76 Tomás Guevara, *Psicología del Pueblo Araucano* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Cervantes, 1908), 404.

77 Guevara, *Psicología del Pueblo Araucano*, 404.

78 Guevara, *Psicología del Pueblo Araucano*, 92, 404. See also Earle, "Algunos pensamientos," 22.

79 Tomás Guevara, "Museos etnológicos americanos," in *Trabajos del cuarto Congreso científico (1º Pan-americano) celebrado en Santiago de Chile del 25 de diciembre de 1908 al 5 de enero de 1909...* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta "Barcelona," 1909-1912), 138; Gänger, *Relics of the Past*, 181.

80 Thomas Miller Klubock, "The nature of the frontier: forests and peasant uprisings in southern Chile," *Social History* 36, n.º 2 (2011): 127-130, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071022.2011.562348>. See Órdenes Delgado and Samaniego Sastre, "La Araucanía profunda"; Correa Cabrera, *La historia del despojo*.

81 Talavera, *El Alcoholismo*, 26-27.

particular the winegrowing business in central Chile, and the idea that the function of the state was to collect taxes for the treasury. However, the first law of 1902 emphasized the control and supervision of alcohol distribution and consumption. In fact, public drunkenness was penalized, and the distribution of alcoholic beverages in liquor stores was strictly controlled.

Despite regulations, production was not affected by new tax burdens, as most taxes were passed on to consumers rather than producers. During the following years and decades, criticism on legislation flooded public discussions throughout Chile.⁸² In any case, during the study period, neither political actors nor scientists linked alcohol consumption on the frontier to land issues in a way that would have helped improve the lives of Chilean settlers and the *che*. In concrete terms, it was not until 1898 when a law was passed in favor of national colonization. Additionally, by the late 1920s, the process of restructuring property under state control, first through various legal entities, involved the transfer of public lands at low cost to landowners (*latifundistas*) in the central and south-central zones—through auctions that encouraged speculation and the expansion of large landholdings—and then to foreign and national settlers. In this process, mestizo-like settlers were stripped of their land titles and indigenous people were dispossessed and displaced. Thus, the new settlers received titles to lands that *fronterizos* and *rotos* had already successfully cultivated for decades. This process made the Chilean settlers willing to do whatever necessary to save their lives, either by submitting to tenancy or trying to overcome their misfortune, at least momentarily. Thus, many of them became mediators, interfering in a conflictive way with indigenous communities. Consequently, crime and vandalism provoked more land abandonments and “constructed wide and irreconcilable geographical, social, and moral frontiers.”⁸³

Furthermore, it was the Bavarian Capuchin missionaries, in support of the Italian Capuchin mission, who were called to the Araucanía by the Chilean state in 1896 to “civilize” the Chilean settlers and, especially, the *che*. In particular, Father Sigifredo de Frauenhäusl became one of the “advocates” of the indigenous population.⁸⁴ In their first annual report of 1904, the Capuchins wrote to a German-speaking readership:

Unfortunately, however, the simple way of life and the firm unity which once made the Araucanian so strong, have now largely disappeared. Drunkenness and other vices introduced by intercourse with the whites have in many cases enervated the people physically and mentally, and the Araucanian, once so jealous of his freedom and his old furrow slice, now not infrequently sells his field and cattle to buy brandy for their price.⁸⁵

82 Editorial, “Nuevas actividades,” *Vida Nueva: Boletín Mensual de la Liga Nacional contra el Alcoholismo* I, n.º 2 (1924): 1.

83 Órdenes Delgado and Samaniego Sastre, “La Araucanía profunda,” 333; 324-328.

84 Fabien Le Bonniec and Marcelo Berho Castillo, “El abogado de los indios y la constitución de la propiedad austral. Relevancia sociojurídica pasada y presente en las cartas del Sigifredo de Frauenhäusl,” in *Explotación y violación de los derechos humanos en territorio mapunche*, edited by Gabriel Pozo Menares (Santiago de Chile: Ocho Libros Editores, 2018), 435-451.

85 “Kurze Geschichte der Araukaner-Mission,” in *Jahres-Bericht über die Tätigkeit der bayerischen Kapuziner in der Araukaner-Indianer-Mission in Chile. Den Wohltätern und Freunden der Mission gewidmet*, edited by Burcardo de Röttingen (Altötting: Druck von Hans Büttner in Altötting, 1904), 3-4.

Much like Guevara, the author portrayed the indigenous population as strong, proud, and free people who had been "protected" for centuries by nature;⁸⁶ all of this was about to disappear by alcohol, among other things. Only a few months later, in February 1905, Father Sigifredo wrote two letters to Luis González, federal prosecutor in Valdivia, and to Secretary Ludovico Barra, denouncing the deceitful businesses of Guillermo Angermeyer, a colonist of German descent, with indigenous people who were given liquor in return for giving up their lands. "Usually, it is vagabond Indians who sell the rights they have to a property," wrote the missionary. Well-connected to federal actors of the region, he made a difference between those *che* who were in the mission's charge—the "good" ones—and those who were negotiating with Angermeyer for alcohol.⁸⁷ Especially, the urban zones and cities on the frontier, such as Valdivia, Osorno, Puerto Montt, and the fast-growing Temuco, with their great number of liquor stores were declared to have a dreadful impact on indigenous culture. For example, Burcardo de Röttingen, prefect of the Capuchin mission, wrote that there were always *che* in Valdivia because of legal proceedings at court about their lands: "They roamed the streets, usually staying overnight in the liquor stalls, where, of course, they got intoxicated. They did not know where to spend the night. To remedy this, I decided to build a simple house in the garden, where they would not disturb us."⁸⁸ Apart from letters, chronicles, reports, and their own periodicals, the Capuchin missionaries also used photographs to document life on the frontier. Similar to the way ethnographers put on stage indigenous culture, they published a photograph taken by B. Hermann of two young indigenous men; one was described as "uncivilized," while the other one was characterized as "urbanized" (see Figure 2).⁸⁹

While "urbanized," in the narrative of the missionaries, alluded to being deformed and ruined, "uncivilized" meant that there were still possibilities to become "civilized" in the way how Capuchins interpreted a civilized person. In fact, the Capuchins looked for opportunities to "save" indigenous people by obligating them to a Christian life. As Martín Correa Cabrera recently summarized, it was primarily the state that was responsible for the process of dispossession, impoverishment, and violence against the *che* starting in 1862.⁹⁰ In contrast to state representatives, certain missionaries helped the *che* to defend their lands or taught them how to read and write. Like many other actors at the time —Franciscan missionaries, scientists, or politicians—, Capuchins also declared that

86 The densely forested Araucanía of southern Chile is described in many contemporary sources as the "natural habitat" of the *che*. The massive deforestation that began during the military occupation was thus associated with a process of "disappearance" of the indigenous population. See, for instance, Verniory, *Diez años en Araucanía* and Arellano Hoffmann, "Las opiniones erróneas que," 140-142.

87 P. Sigifredo de Frauenhäusl to Sr. Luis González H., federal prosecutor in Valdivia. Panguipulli, 18 February 1905, in *Expoliación y violación de los derechos humanos en territorio mapunche*, edited by Gabriel Pozo Menares (Santiago de Chile: Ocho Libros Editores, 2018), Carta 47, 74. P. Sigifredo de Frauenhäusl to Sr. Ludovico Barra E., secretary in Valdivia. Panguipulli, 18 February 1905, in *Expoliación y violación de los derechos humanos*, Carta 48, 75.

88 Burcardo de Röttingen, *Jahres-Bericht über die Tätigkeit der bayerischen Kapuziner*, 19. In addition, the *Comisión Radicadora de Indígenas* was slow to act, reducing the chances of the *che* to own lands, and the judges ordered the expulsion of the Chilean settlers. Banditry and lack of resources also affected this social groups, forcing them to leave their homes. Órdenes Delgado and Samaniego Sastre, "La Araucanía profunda," 331.

89 During this process of land redistribution and expropriation, in particular young people turned their backs on their communities and sought new prospects in the cities. Órdenes Delgado and Samaniego Sastre, "La Araucanía profunda," 335.

90 See Correa Cabrera, *La historia del despojo*, 349-352.

moral education was the best remedy against alcoholism.⁹¹ In the long run, their proposed learning opportunities made indigenous people on the frontier increasingly dependent on others.

Figure 2. “Ein uncivilisierter und ein ‘städtischer’ Indianerbursche”



Source: “Ein uncivilisierter und ein ‘städtischer’ Indianerbursche,” in *Jahres-Bericht über die Tätigkeit der bayerischen Kapuziner in der Araukaner-Indianer-Mission in Chile. Den Wohltätern und Freunden der Mission gewidmet*, edited by Burcardo de Röttingen (Altötting: Druck von Hans Büttner in Altötting, 1904), 17. Photography by B. Hermann.

91 See, for example, Yánez, *Documentos Parlamentarios*, 90; Uribe B., *Memoria del Prefecto de Misiones franciscanas de Chile*, 53. See also Stuchlik, “Las políticas indígenas en Chile,” 181-192, and Arellano Hoffmann, “Las opiniones erróneas que’,” 137-145. For a more general overview, see Sol Serrano, Macarena Ponce de León, and Francisca Rengifo, *Historia de la educación en Chile (1810-2010), Tomo 2. La educación nacional (1880-1930)* (Santiago de Chile: Taurus, 2013).

Conclusion

While in urban areas of central Chile such as Santiago or Valparaíso alcoholism was mainly associated with poverty, on the frontier it was declared, in first instance, a problem among indigenous people and *rotos*. The separation of the *che*'s “glorious past” from their present led to the creation and consolidation of their image as degenerated, drunk, and—in the end—poor and dispossessed indigenous people. This also applies to their mestizo-like neighbors, the so-called *rotos*. Hence, the analysis of the studied documents shows that, within the process of occupation and colonization on the frontier, there had been an emerging narrative convergence between poorness and the debilitated condition of the *che* and mestizo settlers. Thus, alcohol consumption and alcoholism became a supporting argument for the so-called “degeneration” of the indigenous people and the *rotos* in the discourse of the turn of the century. In fact, alcohol on the frontier became the main vehicle for the stigmatization of these populations, as it happened with the sick and poor.

In this context, maintaining the glorious past and the image of a strong *araucano* benefited different actors—state representatives, (foreign) scientists and intellectuals, traders, and missionaries—but not the indigenous people themselves: for example, traders profited from the “exotic” label and indigenous “secrets” of ancient times by selling plant-based bitters, and missionaries “protected” the *che* by invoking their heroic past. Although Capuchin missionaries like Sigifredo de Frauenhäusl, among others, tried to save the *che* from being robbed or exploited by Chilean or European settlers, their help meant new dependencies, which produced new stereotypes based on the alleged poorness and helplessness of the indigenous population, who were perceived and represented as people in need of moral education and salvation by the hands of Europeans.

Hence, the use of the past was also at stake in the process of consolidating new social hierarchies, during the colonization of the frontier and its incorporation into the state territory. It is this colonization and land redistribution that gave rise to the observations presented here about the *che* and *rotos*. As evidenced, alcohol had been introduced as an instrument used in the occupation and appropriation of lands, which gave impetus to private property. While settlers, especially from German-speaking parts of Europe, and Chilean traders built small businesses in the field of agriculture, food, and beer industry, a huge group of poor and—in many cases—landless settlers, as well as indigenous people tried to find their fortune on the Chilean frontier at the turn of the century due to newly established social hierarchies, simultaneous stigmatized perceptions, and dynamics of exclusion.

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